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Understanding Origin and Development of Karma and Rebirth in Early Indian Ethos: Perspectives from Mānavadharmaśāstra

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Abstract

The present paper aims to study the origin and the development of karma and rebirth theory, which was the outcome of the collective historical experiment of multiple social groups under the socially shared ideological philosophical system of Ancient India. The existing historiography looked at it as a superficial system dealing with certain ideas around religion and ritual. Therefore, it missed out on the other aspects related to it, which evolved around the notion of penance and punishment. That internalizes the social order and justified the unaccounted inequalities by forcing individuals to self-surrender for violation of social and legal limitations of the concerned society. This present paper is going to look at this primary idea by focusing on multiple forms of karma and rebirth and the idea of the body in the same as depicted in *Manusmṛti*. In addition to this, it will also check the inter-mixture of social and religious morality in the same through the historical process of ethnicization by making the base to the existing socio-economic environment of the concerned period.

Key Words: - *Karma,* Rebirth, *śrāda,* Ethicalization, *Piṇḍa, Manusmṛti.*

The concept of punishment and penance represents a particular power of coercion of state and society in response to an act of violation of moral and legal limitations, by which it upholds its system and structure and deals with any kind of threat to it in form of crime. But this power of coercion as a method of internalization was not alone based on the political mechanical system of punishment in the domain of the state and its machinery with the power of coercion in traditional societies. But, it also had a strong ideological basis in the concept of "Sin and Penance" or "*pāpa - puṇya*", in which ritual, religious ideologies, philosophy and beliefs play an important role. These two elements

penance and punishment collectively internalize and naturalize the socially constructed world by humans and the unaccounted inequality in that. Thus, these two political and philosophical processes collectively provide the basis for the socio-political order. These two instruments of punishment are thought to have two separate agencies of execution, 1) Divine, and 2) Human. Both supplement each other. In ancient India, these agencies evolved in a gradual process, in which the retribution of punishment was religious and partly political on any moral divergence extended to all the mishaps and calamities. When the human agency as institutional of execution trial came into force, the notion of "trial by ordeal" by god was also working, in which the human part had the responsibility to force the offender to self surrender him/herself for their expiation[1]. The most important element of "Sin and Penance" or the religious ideology and ritual is the "theory of Karma and Rebirth", which did not work as the force of internalization of society, But as an instrument to determine and legitimize the stratified nature of society[2], which was not anti- rational and orthodoxy as sociologist like Louis Dumont, rather it also celebrates the merits of the individual based on action.

Defining "Karma" and "Rebirth"

Any definition of the theory of *Karma* in the context of Ancient Indian philosophy is largely determined by the question of that are we seeking to construct the theoretical model or the historical process. In a general sense, the ancient Indian doctrine of *Karma*, deeply rooted in the historic socio-philosophical system of ancient India is etymologically defined as the "action", which produces a result or outcome in one's present life or several lives. Looking at the Buddhist and later "Hindu" philosophical system, many scholars perceive it as an ethical action that determines the nature and the place of rebirth. A.L. Basham has defined *Karma* as the effect of the former deed, which was committed either in this present life or in the previous life and which determines the condition of present and future life[3]. But its definition is not just limited to cause and effect phenomenon, it contains the strong socio-philosophical process of historical evolution, where multiple theories interacted with each other to produce something specific. That's why its definition is not as simple as it seems.

A. K. Ramanujan underlined the three of its common or general basic elements in the context of the ancient Indian theory of *Karma*; "1. Causality, ethical and non-ethical, involving one or several lives; 2. Ethicalization or the faith that the good and the bad action causes certain sort of result in one life or several lives, 3. Rebirth" (Doniger: 1980:11). Charles F. Keyes explains these elements as 1. Explanation of the present circumstances concerning the previous action, including (possibly) action before the birth; 2.The orientation of the present action towards the future end, including those occurring after the death; 3.The moral basis on which these actions of past and present are predicted[3a]. But going away with the above definition, Patrick Olivelle argued that the basic meaning of the term *Karma* in all Vedic literature is sacrifice (*yajña*)[4]. All in all, It might be that this word acquires some more or a broader definition in course of historical development through the socio-intellectual process, which Gananath Obeyesekere called "Ethicalization"[5].

Origin and Historical Genesis

The internal meaning in this theory could be extracted through the lens of the typology that may help us look into the various patterns, which will not only underline the meaning of the term in a broader sense in the context of Ancient Indian tradition But provide the reflection of its evolution and development.

The theory(ies) of "*Karma*" and "Rebirth" are not unique creation and invention of any particular philosophical tradition in the Ancient Indian context rather it was a kind of socially shared ideological-philosophical structure of ancient India, deep routed in social development as well as the collective historical experience of the concern social community. That transformed through historical development[6].

The historical roots of the theory of Karma could be found in the Vedic and Upanisadic ages, where Vedic sacrifices in ritualistic terms were defined as "*Karma*", which adopted the superseding connotation in the later period of *Upaniṣads* and early historic age. Herman W. Tull argued that the first reference of the theory of *Karma* is found in the *Brāhmaṇas*, and there was a continuity of the philosophy from *Brāhmaṇas* to the *Upaniṣadas*, particularly between the *śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and the *bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣadas*[7]. But he also admitted that there is a difference in the outlook of both texts. He further argued that the sacerdotal teaching of the *Brāhmaṇas* foreshadow the theory of *Karma*[7a]. Most importantly, there was no association of Karma with Rebirth in the earlier textual references; even an ethical connotation of *Karma* was also not given in the *Vedas* and *Brāhmaṇa*[8]. Arvind Sharma points out that there are several distinctions between the theory of *Karma* and rebirth and there was no reference to rebirth in the Rig Vedic literature and their association with each other was a later development[9].

The classic theory of *Kamra* was the outcome of the complex social–philosophical quest in historical development indicated above, in which multiple elements of the social environment contributed. Paul Deussen proposed the three major stages of development of the theory of *Karma,* which underline the addition and alteration in this theory during the course of historical development; A). No transmigration; B). Threefold paths; C). Ethicalization and salvation[10]. The first reference to *Karma* is found in the Rig Veda, where it signifies the ritualistic action and performance, which were related to the "Cosmic man myth"[11] and it was assumed that the Vedic sacrifice lead to the afterlife existing in the real cosmos and the concept of rebirth was on its proto- form. For example, *Agniyāna (agnicayana)* ritual was one of that kind of ritual, in which it was believed that it lead to the afterlife existence of cosmos man in the cosmic world. This theory of rebirth was preceded by the theory of re-death. But as David M. Knipe in his analysis of *śrāda* and *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa,* has shown that people were afraid of the dissolution of an afterlife of the deceased and therefore, they used to desire to restrict this situation. The ritualistic food in these rites was provided to them to restrict them in the cosmos world and prevent them from the "repeat death" or the "*punarmṛtyu*". In such kind of ritualistic thoughts son was perceived as much more important in order to save the dead from rebirth by performing *śrāda*, about which it assumed that he would reborn once again in order to get his way to the ultimate release[12]. The Vedic concept of the *śrāda* acquired a new ritualistic development in the post-Vedic period when it was associated with the "*piṃḍa*", which was the cooked rice mixed with other ingredients such as sesame seeds, milk, butter and honey, etc. It was considered as the transitional food to ancestor between the death and rebirth. It might be that the new change in the mode of production and the gradual growth in paddy cultivation motivated the use of rice for such ritualistic purposes. In *Gṛhasūtras*, it was assumed that if the wife of the householder would eat (Visible) the same substance, which was also eaten (Invisible) by the ancestors of the householder then the embryo, which she would conceive was thought to be the new

body of the deceased person (ancestor). This *piṃḍa* was also viewed as the "*garbha*" in ancient India. This notion was not only developed in order to reverse the idea of re-death into re-birth, but also to present death into immortality[13]. But both of these conditions were supposed to be predetermined by the theory of karma.

In a further development, the concept of merit transfer was introduced in the Vedic *śrāda* ritual, when it was recognized that birth in heaven is not just done by the action of the individual, but itself based on the wider range of social networks and relations. This new idea combined the two major notions related to *karma* and rebirth; transfer of food as well as merit. Now the descendants were supposed to provide their ancestors a part of their own religious merit, which also include the merit of having performed the *śrāda*, in addition to *piṃḍa*. *piṃḍa* was perceived as the tool to enhance the *preta* to come out from the "state of uncertainty or limbo". Most interestingly, now this ritualistic idea is perceived to be beneficial for both *preta*; (who could move further with the performance of the rebirth) and living descendant, (who was supposed to be freed from the haut of that *preta)*. Thus, *śrāda* became a mode of exchange of food and merit to both the individual (cosmic and physical) in both the direction as; - A) Providing the food to *preta* in the form of *piṃḍa*; B) Embryonic substance as food to the unborn descendant of the householder; C) Merit or good deeds, which one acquired from ritual to the *preta* and descendant by the same ritual. Now, the householder is being presented in a very balanced middle point, where, at one side, he is supporting the male life of the past (where *piṃḍa*, offered by him, is consumed by his ancestors) and of the future (Son who, he, he thought, will serve him after his death and whom he must nourish thought his bodily substance before his birth)[14]. These aspects show the role of the son in the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth. But in this formulation of ideas, the role of the parents had been neglected, which was supplemented in the *Upaniṣadas*. On the same line, the most important and interesting aspect of the supplement came in the *Kauṣītaki upaniṣada*, where it is said that a dying person devised his action or *karma* for his son[15]. These ideas evolved in the social environment of the creation of patriarchal institutions in Gangetic valley in the first millennium B.C.

The major transformation in the theory of karma came in the *Upaniṣadic* age when the idea of rebirth was put in the "Vedic scheme" and the concept of salvation knowledge came on the surface and inter-mixed with the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth. Now, it was acknowledged that the actions of the individual determine the nature of rebirth. The most significant reference of the theory of *karma* in such context appears in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (Sometime before the 6th century BCE), where it is said that the karma (not well ethicized) determines one's good or bad rebirth. But here good and bad words are largely rooted in the Vedic thought of the performance of ritual in a proper manner. But the below example also presents the entry of rebirth in relation to "good" and "bad". For example:-

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (3.2.12)

yājñavalkyeti hovāca, yatrāyaṃ puruṣo mriyate kimenaṃ na

jahātīti; nāmeti, anantaṃ vai nāma, anantā

viśve devāḥ, anantameva sa tena lokaṃ jayati. (3.2.12)

"*Arthabhāga* asked *Yājñavalkya*, 'when this man dies, what it that does not leave him is?' *Yājñavalkya* answered 'Name. The name indeed is infinite and without limit, and *Viśvadevas* are also infinite and limitless. He (who knows thus) wins thereby verily a

limitless world."

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Verse: 3.2.13

yājñavalkyeti hovāca, yatrāsya puruṣasya mṛtasyāgniṃ vāgapyeti, vātaṃ prāṇaḥ, cakśurādityam, manaścandram, diśaḥ śrotram, pṛthivīṃ śarīram, ākāśamātma, oṣadhīrlomāni, vanaspatinkeśāḥ, apsu lohitaṃ ca retaśca nidhiyate, kvāyaṃ tadā puruṣo bhavatiti; ahara somya hastamārtabhā, āvāmevaitasya vediṣyāvaḥ, na nāvetat sajana iti.....

tau hotkramya mantrayāṃcakrāte; tau ha yadūcatuḥ karma haiva tadūcatuḥ, atha yatpraśaśaṃsatuḥ karma haiva tat praśaśaṃsatuḥ; puṇyo vai puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati, pāpaḥ pāpeneti . tato ha jāratkārava ārtabhāga upararāma ..

iti dvitīyaṃ brāhmaṇam ...(3.2.13)

"*Ārtabhāga* asked again to *Yājñavalkya*, 'when a man died his speech or vocal organ merged in fire, the breath in the air, the eye in the sun, the mind into the moon, the ear in the quarters, the body in the earth, his self or soul (Atman) in the space, the hair on the body in the herbs, that on the hair in the trees, and the blood and the seed are deposited in water, where happened with a person ?' we 'can't discuss this issue in the public space.' Give me your hand, dear *Ārtabhāga,* we will decide this between ourselves, they went out and talked it over. What they talked about was nothing but action (Karma), and what they praised was nothing but action (Karma). *Yājñavalkya* told him that a person turns into good through his or her good action or karma and evil through evil action or Karma. Thereupon Ārtabhāga, of the line of Jaratkāru, kept silent."

The above dialogue between *Yājñavalkya* and *Ārtabhāga* pointed out that good and the bad action of an individual form condition of rebirth. That itself is bound by the desire. The later verses pointed out that the annihilation of desire or action without desire led to his salvation from this cycle of death and rebirth or *mokṣa*(*bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad, 4.4.7),* which was the primary goal of the *Upanishadic* quest and further celebrated in the *Bhagavadgītā* with the idea of *akarma* or *niṣkāmakarma*[16]. Verse 4.4.10- 11 of the same *upaniṣada* also presents that the ignorance of the path of knowledge leads to the condition of a joyless world hereafter. Gananath Obeyesekere argued that this joyless world is not the *saṃsāra* of a later period. Rather it may be the place, where one goes before the preparatory of rebirth[17], which was a pre-birth condition of the *jīva.*

There is an episode on the dialogue of *Pravāhana jayavali*, *Svetketu* and *Svetketu*'s father *Gautama* also known as *Uddalākāaruni*, which presents another major development in the theory of *karma* and rebirth. It primarily discusses the two-fold path of action, in which the path of the father was for those who follow the traditional sacrificial practice enjoined in the *brāhmaṇas*, go to the world of father and keep going on the cycle of birth and rebirth, those who take the path of the god through the complicated routes described in the entry into the *Brahma* and do not return. But the word good and bad *karma* here are not related to ethical action, but the acceptance and ignorance of two paths. Hermann Oldenberg, Paul Deussen and Surendranath Dasgupta perceive this reference as the "evidence of entry into the Vedic tradition of karma and rebirth". But Obeseyekere pointed out that Karma here was in a kind of transition positional, which had still rooted in the Vedic tradition. She might be indicating that sacrifice rather than the classic idea of karma or deeds was the primary concern of this text. But it is also most noteworthy that verse 4.4.7 of the same text indicates the good and the bad action or the karma results in the continuous rebirth until a person is caught up in desire. Most importantly, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad*

concept of *karma* and rebirth does not have any provision of the punishment for that human being who did wrong. But it is pointed out that those who are ignorant of those two paths suggested by the *jayavalī* take rebirth as the inferior among the creature as "worms, insect or snake" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.16, *Chāndogya Upaniṣada* 5.10.8). But it was not supposed to be caused by the operation of the ethical law of karma. This text also presents an interesting process of attaining rebirth, through food and rain. Another major notable thing is that now the in the *Upaniṣadic* age, the sacrifice of the Vedic period were internalized by giving them a symbolic value and denying salvation to those who perform sacrifices (Downgrading the sacrifices), now the introduction of the new theory of rebirth took place and articulating all of the general *Upaniṣadic* ideas of the unity of *ātma* and Brahman, this text made a crucial departure from the whole of the previous Vedic tradition. Now, these *Upaniṣadas* inherited the term *Karma* from the pre-existing tradition and provided it with a new meaning and sometimes an opposed meaning. The appearance of the term "*Karma*" in the other text can be either the continuity of an idea with a new connotation or might not.

This notion was further followed by *chāndogyopaniṣada* and *kauṣītaki upaniṣadas* with certain new changes and development, which could also be perceived as a departure from the previous theory of the *karma*. *Chāndogya Upaniṣada* clearly underlined the good or the bad Karma and pointed out that the ethical action (Brahmanical) of an individual determines their next reincarnation[18].

Verse 5.10.7 of *Chāndogya Upaniṣada* legitimizes social inequality based on the hereditary system through this notion of karma and rebirth. But as Gananath Obeysekere pointed out, it must be noted down that the "good" and "bad" actions or conduct do not refer to the ethical form here as it has been presented in the Buddhism and Jainism of the later period. Here, it simply indicates the proper behaviour (Pluralistic ethics) or ordained way of life, which was generally expected of the twice-born[19]. This *Chāndogya Upaniṣada* also dealt with the question that how a person can avoid a bad life by restricting him or herself to indulge in certain conduct (5.10.9).

The most important question that remains unanswered is that if the theory of *karma* was the outcome of the Vedic initiative then where did this idea of rebirth come from, which subsequently associated itself with the Vedic theory of *karma*? And what was the process and cause of the combination of two different theories as one? Emphasizing the analysis of the roots and source of this theory, G.C. Pande argued that it is not good to see the development of this theory from a very linear perspective. He further said that it came out from a non-Vedic tradition of *munis* and associated itself with the Vedic theory of *karma*. D.D. Kosambi traces its origin to Indus Valley Civilization. But this argument ignored the fact that the *piṃḍa* in the *śrāddha* ritual, which is a transitional food in the theory of *Karma* is made of important grains in which rice as the seed of the causation plays a major role, even in the *Upanisadic* notion as Karl Potter[20] pointed out. It was assumed that man can take birth through the grain of rice. Rice was not a major grain of Indus Valley culture and therefore it might be that this concept of rebirth has not come from the Indus Valley. In addition to this, there is no concrete evidence, which presents a proper philosophical link between both cultures. Most importantly, Gananath Obeseyekere presented three reasons for its origin; one, it might have been invented by the *Upanisadic* thinker themselves; Second; there was multiple religion under the Vedic tradition since starting and the text presents us a continuous

liner development of this theory; Third, it may be that this theory of rebirth came from any other tradition which was outside of the Vedic *Upanisadic* Framework. Gananath also pointed out that it may be that this notion has been borrowed from the "little tradition" of peasants and the tribal people. As far as the process and casual reason of the combination of two different theories (Theory of Karma and Theory of Rebirth) as a single concept is concerned than Gananath Obeyesekere argued that it was the process of ethnicization, which transform the simple theory of rebirth into the Karmic eschatology[21]. Ethicalization signifies the moral action's evaluation through religious evaluation. In this process, an action that is morally good or bad changes into actions that are also religiously good or bad. This development led to the development of sin and merit in the religious system[21]. Now, this religious morality that emerged out of this process came to be co-related with social morality, which concerns itself with the idea of reward and punishment for various actions of various beings. But this eschatology of rebirth also focuses on the afterlife existence of the being in a non-elemental form and the concept of religious rewards and punishment stretched to the whole eschatological sphere. Therefore, the outer cosmic world was changed and perceived as the place of rewards and punishment for various actions in the earthly world.

In the "Sanskritic religiosity" of ancient India, various kinds of literature stratified the mythical-cosmic worlds of the afterlife as the place of retribution and rewards in relation to the social structure of the caste. It is also pointed out that the soul stays there temporarily or bypasses it all together and is reborn on earth or came in *saṃsāra*. It is pointed out that the condition and the nature of the outer world are also determined by human action and experience in this life. Hertz pointed out that the condition of the outer world is supposed to be a replica of this current world, as it is the product of the mind, which contains some fantasy with utopia, where it is believed that sufferings are eliminated. But in reverse of this, it was also formulated that there could be a particular world where the violators of the religious social norm are sent from the punishment, who committed the heinous crime. In addition to this, as far as the concern about the other world than the *Atharvaveda* present the reference of the *Narakaloka*, which was said to be concerned with the specially listed offences. But there was not any ethical view involved in this. Outer world for all saints and demons, those who did not commit the listed heinous crime, was the same.

But now this *saṃsāra* is itself divided into social structures, where the soul would reach, transformed into a place of sin and merit due to the consequences of the ethicalization. That's why, under the socio-philosophical system, now the earthly world was transformed and changed as a place of reward and retribution. Good birth was perceived as the contingency or the result of the rewards and bad rebirth was thought to be the punishment as the result of the action of an individual in this world, or the previous life. Logically, as one's present life is believed to be influenced by the previous life and previous life it is thought to be under the influence to live before that. Thus, there is a continuation of a series of ethical links. The authority of the execution of rewards could either be the divine authority or the individual's action itself[22]. *Bhagavadgītā* (verse 4.14) pointed out that *karma* itself is the decider of the result, which is separate from divinity[22]. Still, in this stage of development, a strong and powerful "ontological" explanation of the present life's nature and condition took place, which supplemented the ideology of

social stratification.

The concept of *nirvāṇa* or salvation, which indicates the termination of suffering and sorrow, was not the outcome of the process of ethnicization of rebirth theory as Gananatha Obyesekere pointed out. Rather it emerged due to the speculative environment of the Gangetic valley, which was invented by the religious leader of the concerned period. This concept of *nirvāṇa* or salvation argued that this *jīva* could achieve this position only outside of the *saṃsāra,* which lead to the termination of the cycle of death and rebirth. But it must also be noted down that the hypothetical conceptualization of ethicalization has empirical limitations. As the study done by Guy E. Swanson shows that the preliterate society was rooted in the moral universe[23]. But it may be argued that the social secular morality is different from the religious morality and all of them interacted and integrated through the process in course of historical development, but not fully. For example: During the Vedic age the performance of the funeral rites was thought to be important to transfer to the outer world. (JNC Ganguly: 1926) But when the ethicalization took place then the ethical nature of the person's this-worldly action became the deciding element.

With the advent of heterodox religions in the 6th century BCE, the earlier tribal institutions began to dissolute due to a new mode of production, which caused new types of social relationships and new salvation theologies. That also transformed karma and rebirth theory in the process of ethicalization. But it was not the soteriology same to the *Upaniṣadas,* which was the external morality based on subjective internal ethics. Gananath Obyesekere through the study of the contemporary Indian tribes presented that the primitive society lacks ethics and the Buddha has helped to ethicize the *Brahmanic* religious ideas prevailing in the Ganga region, such as the sacrifice, the god and the magical ideas of the *Atharvavedic* tradition. The Buddhist tradition adopted the previous terms from the tradition. But it injected a new set of notions and ideas with it, which led to a kind of breakdown from the previous thoughts[24]. This development was the result of a process of composition of the diverging ideational system, in which there is a tradition and continuity of debate and argument, which led to the shift and change in the epistemology of the word. Buddhist ideas on the theory of *karma* and rebirth excluded the notion of the soul and emphasized the action of the individual as the sole vehicle to carry forward the deeds of action throughout the cycle of death and rebirth (Gombrich:2019). But this theory of karma by Buddha was based on social–secular morality, which was further supplemented by religious morality. As Émile Durkheim[25] in his work pointed out morality is established on a social network and relation. That's why, as Ganantha Obeyesekere suggested that it was inter- relation to a lay community (Common people), which caused the systematic ethicalization of a religion[26] and provided a ground for morality to *Buddha.* This could be the main reason for the question that why the *Upaniṣadas* did not focus on external morality as they were concerned with the individual ascetic or the individual quest for salvation, who renounced the world to find out the salvation and were not interested in the existing lay soteriology. The Salvific goal, which these Śramaṇa leaders taught, was accessible to all the people contrary to Upanisadic Guru and his pupil.

Karma and Caste: underlining the mode of internalization

Based on Michel Foucault's writing Patrick Olivelle pointed out that religious ideology through the notion of sin and

penance played important role in social internalization (Olivelle:). Thus the theory of Karma and rebirth played an important role in rationalizing an anti-rational rigid social system of caste in Ancient India (B.K. Matilal: 2002: 139). But this purpose of internalization became the central aspect of this theory during *the Smṛti* age[27].

The philosophy of caste and karma outwardly represent different sort of social system and structure and there is a huge paradoxicality between them as Karma, as a rational notion support the merit-based social structure and Caste support the heredity one. These two are opposite to each other and volatile. But the inter-mixture made merit-based society and heredity society's combination very feasible and flexible, in the socio-philosophical structure of Ancient India, perfectly injected. Therefore, The theory of *Karma* had two dimensions, at one hand it permits an individual to improve his social position through his action and merit, no matter in which caste he was born and on the other hand, it worked as a cyclic universal causal law in which birth of an individual in the present social group has been told to be the result of the previous birth[28]. But it was not as liberal as it seems rather it was rooted in the social sustainability and internalization ideas, which aimed to resolve the tension created by the unaccounted-for inequalities, nurtured in a hierarchical society[29]. Most interestingly, in this entire philosophy either role of divine authority was removed (Bhagavatagītā, Chapter 4, Verse 12-14) or his existence was negated (Buddhism) and the entire responsibility of individual social position were put on himself as it was profound that the inequalities were the creation by supreme lord but by the law of action or karma, administrator by god, an individual could influence his/her position in next birth. Thus, the social tension and social evils were dislodged.

This *Karmic* theory as the mode of internalization contains several inner dimensions as has been presented in the Sanskrit literature. One important dimension is the notion of "*svadharma*", duties prescribed by the code, that one was expected to follow. B.K. Matilal argued that "*svadharma*" is interchangeable with the "*svābhāva*" which means to advise someone to follow his or her instinct nature in his or her *karma,* which stresses the follow the action based on "qualities". Adi Shankaracharya in his commentary on *Bhagavatagītā* mentioned the three *saṃkhyā guṇa*: "*sattva, rājas* and *tāmas. Sattva* indicate to anything good and pious. *Rājas* is related to the activities with qualities, drive, passion, which is not always good, also not bad either". *Tāmas* indicates ignorance, darkness, confusion, and non-intelligent, mechanical labour. Sankara had connected these various *gunas* with *varnas*, for example, *Brāhmaṇas* with *sattva, Kṣatriya* with *rājas* and *tāmas, śudra* with *Tāmas* combined with a minor portion of *rājas.* This narration of "qualities", in terms of a few literatures, was not rigid and orthodox. Multiple Sanskrit literatures also emphasized that if *śudra* had all the virtues of *Brāhmaṇa,* he could be "defined" as "*Brāhmaṇas*"[30].

The idea of rebirth has been formulated concerning the concept of "Hell" and "Heaven", which interfere between higher or lower birth based on merit earned through the actions of the individual. This idea was produced to attempt to provide "non-metaphysical" justification for the dominant ritual practice.

Importance of Mānavadharmaśāstra in the Theory of Karma in relation to Punishment

Manusmṛti or *Mānavadharmaśāstra* is most prominent in ancient Indian treatise

on dharma, which was also celebrated by the later lawgivers too and they also based their own composition on the broader idea of *Manusmṛti*. For example, *Bṛhaspati*, a well-known composer of *Dharmaśāstra* himself pay tribute to *Manu* and *Yajnāvālkya* placed Manu at the head of his list of authors of *Dharmaśāstra*. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* was the outcome of the authorship skills of the particular individual and several redactors, who were conscious of their work and they tried to give their work a particular shape and structure regarding the law and morality. This text was the composition of moral maxims and the legal notions of the concerned society and its intellectual basis. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* was the outcome of the authorship skills of the particular individual and several redactors, who were conscious of their work and they tried to give their work a particular shape and structure regarding the law and morality(Olivelle:2005:6), which evolved through the last centuries as well as early centuries of the Christ.

Source of Dharma

Sources of legal authority is based on both the religious and social foundation of the law or the normative ideologies of the society. These sources of law are general categories such as morality, politics, history or universal, legislative and traditional rules. The priority given to these or their balance differentiates the legal system from each other and also distinguishes the period of their internal history[31]. Hindu jurisprudence focused and emphasized the household as the primary institutional location of law. More broadly. We can say that Hindu legal tradition maintains the supremacy of authority over the responsibility in regard to the law that occurs at the level of the community that the paradigmatic community is the household or the family, particularly the household of an educated Brahmin. This law based on the social institutions also helped in the identification of the shared goals of ancient Indian society. For this purpose, at the micro level of society, the household was the more effective, which can impart and impose the common value and good to its member and convince them to follow them.

The concept of *dharma*, which has been introduced as the set of the good and bad qualities regarding the concept of action has been the timeless and the normative practice of all the four social classes or Varna (*Mānavadharmaśāstra*, 1.102-107)[32] was the marker and distinguish element between the religious morality (a good and bad deed) and social morality. In the case of *Mānavadharmaśāstra* religious morality superseded social morality, which was also working as the source to identify the nature of individual action as "morally correct" or not, this entire ideology of religious morality was based on a socio-political system of internalization.

The word "*śāstra*" in the term of *Mānavadharmaśāstra* signifies a kind of traditional system of expert knowledge in a particular field, which is a kind of science. The term itself implies textualization of that science, which has its root in history and tradition and with an attempt to investigate within the tradition. Thus, being a *śāstra*, *Mānavadharmaśāstra* introduced new knowledge as well as the presentation of past knowledge in a new way. But as Patrick Olivelle says, "it is a crystallization of long tradition of the accumulated knowledge"[33]. In this project, the author of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (or even any other *śāstra*) took materials from their past predecessors like *Gautama*[34] *Pataṃjali*[35] and *Kauṭilya* (duties and action of Ruler, which Patrick Olivelle shown in his two important work)[36]. Like *Gautamadharmaśūtra*, Manu argued that the *Veda* along with tradition and

the practice of those who know the Veda is the source of *dharma*. Manu argued that the Veda is the eternal eyesight of the ancestors, gods and humans and they are supposed to be beyond logic. It is also pointed out that any action, which is not in relation to the Veda brings no fruit. The second source of the *Dharma* is *śruti* or tradition, which refers to the specific texts that contain the collected tradition of virtuous and lawful people. The third source of this law is the behaviour of "good people" and what is pleasurable to oneself (*Mānavadharmaśāstra, 2.6-7)*

The "good People" has been geographically identified as those who lived on the land which was created by the god and situated between the divine rivers of *Sarasvatī* and *Drasadvatī* known as the *Brahmāvarta*, where conducts are handed down from generation to generation in social groups and the intermediate classes of this regions are called that good person (*Mānavadharmaśāstra, 2.17-18)*.

Action and Fruit

The *Manusmṛti* followed the long historical tradition of development and alteration in the "theory of Karma and Rebirth", which has been dealt with in relation to the long process of ethicalization and *Dharma-Karma*. Therefore, it presents the concrete system of action and rebirth. Manu has identified the threefold source of origin of action; Mind (*mānasa*), Speech (*vāca*), and Body (*Deha*) and pointed out that the action produced by these sources determines the good and bad outcome in the future[37] or even the nature and condition of the rebirth of a being is determined by the action (*Manusmṛti* 12.3-4). Manu, in a very systematic manner, formulated some kind of mechanism around the concept of *Karma* and rebirth, in which he, first, has listed the bad qualities and actions (*pāpa*) related to these sources, which further produces certain kinds/forms of possible rebirth. Firstly he noted the source of origin of Karma as (*Mānavadharmaśāstra*, 12.5-7)

Mental action: - Coveting the property of others, reflecting on the undesirable things in one's mind and adhering to false doctrine – low caste.

Verbal action: - saying very harshly, speaking untruth, detracting from the merit of all men and speaking and talking idly – a bird or beast.

Body action: - Getting what has to be given, unlawfully hurting the creature, having sex with the other's wife - something inanimate.

In this system of categorization, Manu made very interesting remarks that "A person is thought to enjoy or suffer the deeds done by the mind with the mind, the actions taken by the speech by the speech and the deeds done by the body through the body." Therefore, it has also been formulated that the above three types of karma will cause to particular kind of rebirth, in which the sinful action done through specific sources lead to a specific rebirth.

The Inner Selves

In *Mānavadharmaśāstra,* the vehicle to transfer the outcome of deeds in the next life or of the previous life has been identified as the soul, consciousness, or the *jīvātmā.* Therefore, *manu* has differentiated *kṣetraja* "Knower of the field" (the one who makes this body act), *bhūtātmana* "elemental self" (one who performs the action), the *jīva* (Who experiences all the pain and pleasure in succeeding life)(*Mānavadharmaśāstra* 12.13-14)[38]. But the most confusing argument *Mānavadharmaśāstra* has made is that his *jīva* originated from the supreme self (maybe *Brahma*) and their actions are inspired by this supreme self, which is similar to the Upanisadic line of thought (*Kenaüpaniṣad*, 1.1- 1.9). But did not answer the question

that why the individual is a sinner if the inspiration is Brahma itself. It might be that the *manu* is trying to indicate that the action and the outcome of a soul are pre-decided and he has some power to effect it through their action in relation to the law.

The Process of Rebirth

As noted above the process of death, rebirth and action in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* revolve around the *jīva,* which provides consciousness to *bhūtātmana* and experience all the pain and pleasure in multiple lives. But this pain and pleasure were not just confined to this material world But it was also related to the transcendental world too. This is where, *Manusmṛti* reflects on the notion of hell and heaven and discusses a process of cleanness of the "*jīva*" from sin, which he acquires from worldly actions. Manu said that "When an evil man leaves his body or dies, another firm body is prepared for the *jīvātmā* from the same five elemental particles to suffer the soreness by the Lord *Yama*". After this soreness with that body, the individual (*jīva)* merges in the very elemental particles, each into its corresponding particles[39].

Mānavadharmaśāstra (12.16-17) says:-
pañcabhya eva mātrābhyaḥ pretya duṣkṛtināṃ nṛṇām .
śarīraṃ yātanārthīyamanyadutpadyate dhruvam ..
tenānubhūya tā yāmīḥ śarīreṇaiha yātanāḥ.
tāsveva bhūtamātrāsu pralīyante vibhāgaśaḥ .[40].

The idea of divine retribution was given a good place in the concept of *karma* and rebirth in *Manusmṛti*. It is supposed that after this soreness resulting from the attachment to the material object and sins that leads to misery. Here, it also indicates that the Manu also emphasized the idea of renunciation, the *jīva* becomes free from the speck then it goes to two beings of the great power, who further examine his sin and merit of the *jīva,* and decide that weather it will reside in hell or heaven, but it is also pointed out in *Manusmṛti* that his decision by supreme self and *mahat* is itself based on the concept of *Dharma.* It is presented that if most of his action in the earthly world was righteously and unrighteous action was a small degree, he, enfold in those five elements by which the body is supposed to make up, enjoy the happiness in heaven. If the unrighteous action dominates the action of jiva, he is sent back to face the torments of *Yama* again, which cleans up him from sin and set his mind on righteous conduct[41]. This very idea could also be seen as the interaction between the earthly world and the afterworld, which was working together in order to create internalization of the social structure. In addition to this, it also presents the two-fold purification of the soul by the torment of lord *Yama.*

The Three Attributes and Rebirth

The inherent attributes in relation to the action are also discussed in *Manusmṛti,* which also determine the nature of human birth. Verse 12.24 of the *Manusmṛti* discusses the three *guṇas* or the inherent qualities of the matters as *satva*(Goodness), *rājasa*(Passion), *tāmasa*(Darkness), Manu further says that the dominance of any one of them decides the nature and action of a man and effect the *jīva* (*Manusmṛti* 12.24-26). It also seems that these three attributes also contribute to the formation of the social environment, which itself is based on a wide social network and created a mechanism of action and outcome. Manu pointed out that *satva*(Goodness) produces the *dharma* by which one becomes "gods", *rājasa*(Passion) produces *artha*, The dominance of this makes an individual a human, *tāmasa*(Darkness) produces *kāma*, those who possess it become animal (Sankra).

These attributes have further been divided into three levels by Manu "high, low and middle"[42], which are said to depend on the particular type of action and the knowledge within each.

Mānavadharmaśāstra also presents the possible form or the nature of the rebirth based on the above action and knowledge. These possible forms of rebirth are discussed in relation to nine subtypes of three *guṇas* or the inherent qualities, which is something different from the previous one. Particular *guṇa* suppose to cause a particular kind of rebirth; *satva*(Goodness)-position of a god, *rājasa* (Passion)-state of men, *tāmasa*(Darkness)- the condition of beasts[43]. Each of these nine sub-categories had four to nine verities of possible rebirth[44].

Qualities	Lower	Middle	Highest
Satva(Goodness) – State of God	• Hermit, • Ascetics, • Priest • Divine hosts in celestial • Chariots, • Asterisms • and • *Daityas*	• Gods • Vedas • Sacrificers • Seers • Celestial light • Ancestor • Years • Realized one	• Brahmās • All Creators • The Great • The unmanifest • Dharma
Rājasa(Passion) – State of Passion	• Dancers • Wrestlers • Prize – Fighters • *Jhallas* • *Mallas* • Men who live by the vile occupation • People who are addicted to gambling and Drinking	• Kings • *Kṣatriyas* • Royal chaplains • Professional debaters • Soldiers	• *Gandharvas* • *Guhyakas* • *Yaksas* • Divine attendants • All *Apsarases*
Tāmasa – State of Darkness	• Immobile creatures • Worms • Insects • Fish • Snakes • Creeping Animal • Farm Animal • Jackals	• Elephants • Horses • Śudra • Despised Foreigners • Lions • Tigers • Boars	• *Caranas* • *Suparnas* • Hypocritical Men • Fiends • Ghouls

Laying down the stress on the "Renunciation and *Dharma*", Manu also pointed out that those who do not perform their duties (*Dharma*) due to indulgence in sensory objects, take rebirth in the lower castes.

Sin and Rebirth

The sin as crime and the rebirth is another major focal point, which is found in *Mānavadharmaśāstra, which* are basically moral sins and are the outcome of a long historical process of ethicalization. This ethicalization well reflects in verses 11.55- 11.108. For example:-

anṛtaṃ ca samutkarṣe rājagāmi ca paiśunam .

guroścālikanirbandhaḥ samāni brahmahatyayā ..[45]

"Speaking untruth in order to self-advancement, lying in front of the king and

falsely harassing a teacher is same or equal to the "brāhmaṇa- killing".

This entire 11th section of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* speaks of the sin and penance for them in order to rectify. But, there is no reference to worldly retribution or punishments for such acts. It is only in chapter 12 of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra,* sins in relation to rebirth have been emphasized, where it is pointed out that the consequences of the action of the individual (sins) decide that what womb his/her soul would be entered and what form and nature of his/ her next life or in other words, how will they enter in *Saṃsāra*. But it is also mentioned that before acquiring these transmigratory states, these "sinner *jīva*" have to go through a dreadful hell for years in order to expiation. These are listed as (*Mānavadharmaśāstra* 12.54- 60)[46]:-

Sin	**Outcome**
A murderer of a *Brāhmaṇa*	**Enters in the womb of a dog, a pig, a donkey, a camel, a cow, a goat, a sheep, a deer, a bird, a *cāṃḍāla* and a *Pulkasa*.**
A *Brāhmaṇa* who drinks wine	**Enter in the womb of worms, insects, moths, Birds that feed on excrement and the vicious animal.**
A *Brāhmaṇa* who steals	**Enter thousands of times the womb of spiders, snakes, lizards, aquatic animals and vicious ghouls.**
A man who has intercourse with an elder's wife	**Enter hundreds of times the womb of grasses, shrubs, creepers, carnivorous animals, fanged animals and creatures that commit cruel deeds.**
Vicious individuals	**Become carnivorous animal**
Those who have intercourse with the lowest-born women	**Become ghost**
Thieves	**Cannibals**

This list goes further with several kinds of rebirth in response to the particular type of mortal sin, which includes animals as well as the certain low kind of people (*Mānavadharmaśāstra* 12.61-68). Most important and interesting, Manu has made a parallel line and inter-relation between the object of stolen and the rebirth. For example:-

Stolen object	Possible Rebirth
Gem, pearls, Corals and any precious substance	Goldsmith
Grain	Rat
Water	Aquatic bird or Plava coot
Milk	A Cow

Most interestingly, it is also pointed out that if women follow the same sins, she would become the wives of the same creature in the upcoming life. There are two major focal points: one is related to adultery another is related to deviation from the *Varṇāśramadharma, which* works as the force of the sustainability of social structure and ideology. Therefore, *Manusmṛti* tried to control adultery in order to restrict the condition of *Varṇaśaṃkara* or sexual morality (*Mānavadharmaśāstra 5.162-65)*. It is argued here that "those women who fail to perform their duties towards her husband, they became an object of contempt in the world and take the rebirth in form of a jackal and tormented by the foul disease and those women whom women perform their duty very well, they fame and heaven near her

husband"[47]. But Manu did not clarify that if her husband did not get a good place in heaven by his action, so the woman who followed her duties will get that place in heaven or not? By prescribing the multiple forms of rebirth because of deviation from the respective duties, it tried to maintain and sustain the prevailing social order. But it was not the case that these rules restricted to deviation related to non- *dvijas* But *dvijas* too (*Mānavadharmaśāstra* 12.70-72). Manu pointed out that all deviated people of *varna* became *preta,* the brahmās would convert into *ulkāmukha ghost*-eating vomit, *Kṣatriya* will be *kaṭapūta* ghost eating filth and the corpses, *Vaiśya* will be *maitrākṣatryojotika* feeding on pus, *śudra* will be *cailāśaka* ghost feeding on moths (*Manusmṛti* 12.70-72)[48]. In this system of rebirth, the performance of action is lacking on the duty assigned to the particular *varna.* It is also mentioned that these sinful actions of the men without little understanding bring torment for him in various births in order to suffer and face multiple types of dreadful hells and torture through the several births. It might be that these multiple births are supposed to have two-fold purposes from a theoretical perspective: one, punishment and another, expiation.

Action, which leads to salvation and Supreme good

Manu has also listed that action, which leads to supreme good and *mokṣa.* These are mentioned as Vedic recitation, ascetic toil, controlling senses, refraining from causing injury, and service of teachers and knowledge. These six kinds of action were proposed as the mode which leads men towards the supreme good afterlife. But the supremacy of the tradition, which is supposed to hold the knowledge of the self is supposed to be a good way to attain supreme good according to Manu. But Manu again emphasized the Vedas over these six actions and excluded the other doctrine of salvation from this framework. He argued that the action derived by it leads towards the supreme good. These actions prescribed by the Vedas are again divided into two parts by the Manu; advancing (which is supposed to secure the enlargement of happiness afterlife), which is a desire full action to get a place in this world and hereafter and man through this get an equal place to the gods; arresting (which secure the supreme good), which is a desire less action and by performing it he transcends into the five elements and secure salvation from the cycle of death and rebirth. This idea of action is similar to *Bhagavadgītā*'s *a-karma* and *niṣkāmakarma*[49].

Conclusion

In the concluding remarks, it can be said that the theory of *karma* and rebirth, originated separately and integrated with each other during the course of historical development in which the process of ethicalization also played an important role and provide the basis for the idea of good and bad deed in context of the notion of morality. But this morality was itself based on the social environment and the need of the society, which produce the ideas and thought related to philosophy and law. Therefore, the theory of *karma* and rebirth in the context of ancient India was the product of the collective historical experience of multiple social groups under the socially shared ideological philosophical system of ancient India. In addition to this, this doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth was an instrument for the justification of socio-economic inequality among the social groups by rationalizing heredity social structure. As far as the case of *Mānavadharmaśāstra* is concerned then it contains a well-developed theory of *karma*

and rebirth, in which religious morality, sin, action, salvation and nature of rebirth are formulated in relation to each other, but like *Bhagavadgītā*'s *a-karma* and *niṣkāmakarma,* it also emphasized on the desire less action as the vehicle of salvation from the cycle of death and rebirth. But all in all, through the narration of the inter-relation of certain actions and possible rebirth, it tried to provide the justification for unaccounted inequality of society based on heredity and internalize the society and social structure.

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